

Promising Practice: Pre-Nursing Assistant Classes Central Community College Health Education Laddering Program (Project HELP)

An innovative method of preparing students to become Nursing Assistants (NAs) was developed by Project HELP, a Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program funded by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance. Pre-NA classes are offered for students who score between a 3rd-grade and 5th-grade reading level on the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) assessment.

The HPOG grantee found that some students had difficulty in the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) course because it was hard to learn all the medical vocabulary that they are to know upon course completion during the short time frame of the course. In order to be successful in completing the CNA course, participants must be reading at a 5th- to 7th-grade level. All participants complete the TABE assessment upon entrance into Project HELP at Central Community College, and this assessment helps project staff determine if students are at these reading levels. If students are not currently performing at a 5th- to 7th-grade level, the Pre-NA course can help them to polish their skills.

There are multiple learning objectives for the Pre-NA course:

- Increase participant knowledge of medical/nursing terminology utilized in the CNA course.
- Increase participant comfort level in the traditional college classroom.
- Increase participant baseline reading ability.
- Increase participant enrollment in the CNA course.
- Increase participant knowledge of finding, applying for, gaining, and keeping employment.

Currently, Pre-NA courses are offered on the Columbus, Grand Island, and Hastings campuses in Nebraska. The class is held three hours a week, usually one night per week. It is taught by a Project HELP instructor. The curriculum was written by the vocational English as a second language (VESL) specialist with the assistance of an NA instructor, who currently teaches the Pre-NA course.

One resource needed to conduct the class is the NA textbook. In addition, Project HELP has written its own curriculum to focus on the medical vocabulary with which students must demonstrate proficiency when they take the CNA course. In the Pre-NA class, very few skills are taught because those skills will be the focus during the NA course and because instructors for the Pre-NA class are generally not nurses who would be qualified to teach the skills portion of the course.

The arrangements to conduct this course were orchestrated through the adult education department at Central Community College. Project HELP follows the payment rules and student

orientation process of the adult education department for students enrolling in the Pre-NA class. Approvals for Project HELP to offer this Pre-NA class were obtained from both the adult education department and the extended learning services department.

One of the obstacles encountered in offering the Pre-NA class is having enough students at the 3rd- to 5th-grade reading level at the same time who can take the class together. It may not be possible to offer a class every semester because of the number of students who sign up.

Pre-NA courses offer successful remediation for students to improve their reading ability and knowledge of medical terminology in order to gain entry into certified nursing assistant courses.

**Promising Practice: Student Binders
Central Community College
Health Education Laddering Program**

The three main goals for Central Community College Project HELP (Health Education Laddering Program) are to recruit, empower, and enroll students; give students the tools to be successful in their training; and assist students with securing jobs. These three goals are the guideposts for determining which materials should be included in the student binder, the central repository for educational and employment information for students. One of the most critical components is the one-page student contract or action plan. This document outlines what is expected of the students. The binder contents help to frame discussions between the case managers and students. Anything related to college and career information can be entered, organized, and maintained in the binder. The binder teaches students organizational and record keeping skills.

For other grantees to create student binders it would be necessary for a program team to brainstorm the items that are important to include. The Central Community College student binder model originated from IBEST and VESL learning and was developed through monthly team meetings held with community liaisons, case managers, and program management staff.

When students begin the HELP program, career assessments are completed. These assessments show students their top interests and skills and help to guide them toward career choices that would be good matches for their abilities and interests. The case manager presents each incoming student with a student binder and reviews the binder components with him or her. As the student progresses through the program, the case manager can revisit sections of the binder that are relevant to a student's current stage of development in the program. New information can be added as the student progresses through the program. The binder is a resource students can take with them and refer back to in the future. The sections of the binder include:

- I. Nebraska career connections information
 - a. Nebraska career education model
 - b. Instructions to login to Nebraska Career Connections and instructions to complete Kuder Career Search assessment
- II. Attending college tips
 - a. Dealing with stress
 - b. Time management
 - c. Dealing with depression
 - d. Reducing text anxiety
- III. Job search
 - a. Sample employment application, including background check and drug screening information
 - b. Writing a resume, cover letter, and thank you letter

- c. Interviewing: Questions, sample rating sheet, dos and don'ts, common reasons people aren't hired, illegal questions, preparing for an interview
- d. Workplace skills: Communication, organization, computer, interpersonal, analytical/critical thinking, leadership, time management, mathematical, professional
- IV. Personal development
 - a. Career choices
 - b. Work styles and values
 - c. Work ethic
 - d. Privacy and confidentiality
 - e. Culturally competent
 - f. Professionalism
- V. Tips for keeping your job
 - a. Try and make the job work
 - b. Work hard
 - c. Be on time
 - d. Be a team player
 - e. Be flexible
 - f. Don't complain
 - g. Offer to help
 - h. Keep your thoughts to yourself
 - i. Be positive
 - j. Accept that sometimes things aren't going to go the way you would like them to go
 - k. Prepare your departure
- VI. Education quest
 - a. College planning services
 - b. College planning for adult learners

Some of the information contained in the binder is general and applies to all students. For example, it includes general information on time management and handling stress effectively. Also included are resources relevant to getting a first job, such as sample job applications, resume information, tips on interviewing effectively, post-job interview considerations, material on developing a good work ethic, and suggestions for how to keep the job.

Other information in the binder is more specifically related to the career interests indicated through the individual assessments. Individualized binder sections include a career path document, a program map for classes that are needed to complete a particular course of study, and financial aid information. The binder includes information relevant to the particular career choice of the individual. For example, someone in a Registered Nurse program of study would have information describing what an RN job might be like, the wage range for this position, and the length of time needed to complete this course of study.

The binder is an evolving document. Students maintain it over the course of their studies and can always add materials to it, making it a useful handbook that they can continually refer to as they progress through the program and into the workplace.